



FORUM: UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

QUESTION OF: MEXICAN DRUG WAR



UNITED NATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The Mexican Drug War primarily refers to the conflict between the Mexican government and the drug cartels of Mexico, which informally began in 1971 with the American War on Drugs and dramatically escalated to a conflict of its own under the administration of Mexican President Felipe Calderón.

The conflict formally started on December 11, 2006, when President Calderon launched the "Operativo Conjunto Michoacan " in which 7,000 soldiers, marines and federal police were sent to the state of Michoacan to fight drug cartels.

Mexican cartels have been the primary traffickers of illicit drugs into the United States for many years, and as various cartels' power grew, so did money laundering, corruption, and drug-related violence in Mexico. Most of this violence is perpetrated against civilians, who are routinely caught in the crossfire between the military and cartels or else are threatened, extorted, or callously murdered by cartels.

Currently, there is no clear end to the conflict in sight, especially considering that criminal organizations have begun to diversify into other illegal businesses as the drug market shrinks.





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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Drug Cartel is a criminal organization composed of independent drug lords who collude with each other in order to improve their profits and dominate the illegal drug trade. Drug cartels form to control the supply of the illegal drug trade and maintain prices at a high level. The formation of drug cartels is common in Latin American countries. Rivalries between multiple drug cartels cause them to wage turf wars against each other.

The basic structure of a drug cartel is as follows:

Falcons: Considered the "eyes and ears" of the streets, the "falcons" are the lowest rank in any drug cartel. They are scouts responsible for conducting reconnaissance, such as reporting the activities of the police, the military and rival groups.

Hitmen: The armed group within the drug cartel, responsible for carrying out assassinations, kidnappings, thefts and extortions, operating protection rackets, as well as defending their *plaza* (turf) from rival groups and the military.

Lieutenants: The second highest position in the drug cartel organization, responsible for supervising the hitmen and falcons within their territory. They are allowed to carry out low-profile murders without permission from their bosses.

Drug lords: The highest position in any drug cartel, responsible for supervising the entire drug industry, appointing territorial leaders, making alliances, and planning high-profile murders.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Due to its location, Mexico has long been used as a staging and transshipment point for narcotics and contraband between Latin America and U.S. markets. Mexican bootleggers supplied alcohol to the United States' gangsters throughout prohibition in the United States, and the onset of the illegal drug trade with the U.S. began when prohibition came to an end in 1933. Near the end of the 1960s, Mexicans started to smuggle drugs on a major scale.



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During the 1970s and early 1980s, Colombia's Pablo Escobar was the main exporter of cocaine and dealt with organized criminal networks all over the world. While Escobar's Medellin Cartel and the Cali Cartel would manufacture the products, Miguel Angel Felix Gallardo's Guadalajara Cartel would oversee distribution. The Colombian organizations formed partnerships with Mexico-based traffickers to transport cocaine by land through Mexico into the United States.

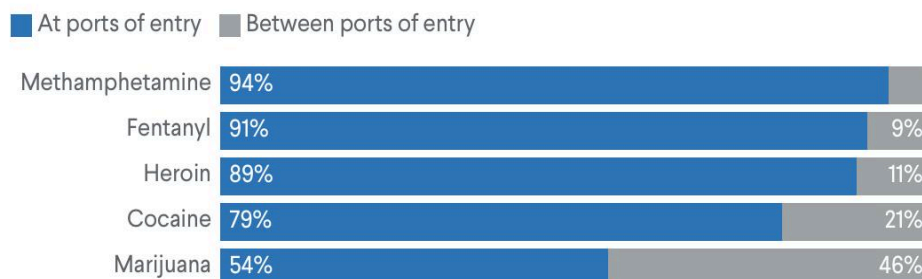
This was easily accomplished because Mexico had long been a major source of heroin and cannabis, and drug traffickers from Mexico had already established an infrastructure that stood ready to serve Colombia-based traffickers. By the mid-1980s, the organization from Mexico was an established and reliable transporter of Colombian cocaine.

While many factors contributed to the escalating violence, security analysts in Mexico City trace the origins of the rising violence to the unravelling of a longtime implicit arrangement between narcotics traffickers and governments controlled by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which began to lose its importance on political power in the late 1980s.

The fighting between rival drug cartels began in earnest after the 1989 arrest of Felix Gallardo, who ran the cocaine business in Mexico. There was a lull in the fighting during the late 1990s, but the violence has steadily worsened since 2000.

Most Drugs Are Seized at Ports of Entry

Drug seizures in fiscal year 2021



Note: Percentages reflect seizures along the southwestern border by the Office of Field Operations, which generally confiscates drugs at ports of entry, and by the Border Patrol, which generally apprehends drugs between ports of entry.

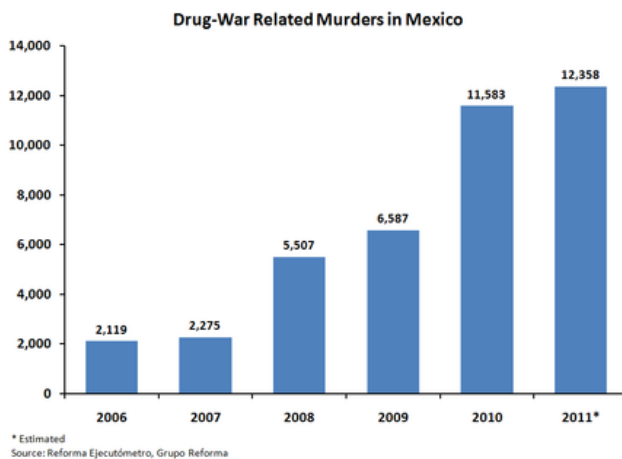
Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection.



CURRENT SITUATION

The power of Drug cartels has worsened since the 2000s, and according to the National Drug Intelligence Centre and other sources within the U.S., the Sinaloa Cartel was primarily involved in the distribution of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, fentanyl and cannabis.

As of 2023, the Sinaloa Cartel remains Mexico's most dominant drug cartel. After the arrest of Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman and his son Ovidio Guzman Lopez in 2016 and 2019 respectively, the cartel is now headed by old school leader Ismael Zambada Garcia and Guzman's other children, Jesus Alfredo Guzman and Ivan Archivaldo Guzman Salazar. The cartel has had an immeasurable impact on the War on Drugs, both international and local politics, as well as in popular culture. Drug War-related murders have significantly increased since the 1980s.



Drug war-related murders in Mexico, 2006-2011

MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

MEXICO

Since Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador became the president, the Mexican government has, at the surface level, attempted to change its strategy towards the illegal drug trade.

It aims to combine a social approach to drain drug cartels' ability to attract the public to their activities with the development of a new national police force, the Guardia Nacional. In practice, this strategy represents a significant change to the previous policy. The president



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claimed that his government would face down gangs with intelligence rather than force whilst focusing on poverty and other root causes of crime. During his presidency, positive impacts on violence and security can be observed, with a 3,6% decrease in homicides from 2020 to 2021.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

An epidemic of addiction and overdose within its borders is believed to be an effect of increased trafficking of harder drugs by cartels, along with the high rates of violent crime in Mexico. As a result, the US has given almost \$2.5 billion in funding through the Merida Initiative to help with equipment, training, resources, intelligence and technical assistance.

Most of the allocated funds have gone to strengthening Mexico's various security apparatus to combat drug violence. The US has also increased border security on its side of the border. During recent talks with the past president of the US government, Donald Trump, Mexico emphasized the need to replace the Merida Initiative after 13 years in action for a more comprehensive action plan which will also take into account issues related to security and violence within the country.

Therefore, on January 31, 2022 the U.S.- Mexico Bicentennial Framework for Security, Public Health, and Safe Communities was established to develop a joint action plan to protect citizens in both countries. For instance, joint objective 1.2.1 intends to: Strengthen and enhance violence prevention and community outreach policing to foster peaceful communities. Because the cartel itself has thrived from its innovative structure as a federation rather than a traditional hierarchy, it is likely to further splinter as infighting among its leadership still continues.

SINALOA CARTEL

Long considered Mexico's most powerful organization, the cartel faces an uncertain future owing to the imprisonment of one of its most powerful leaders, Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman, a symbol of the Mexican drug trade.

JALISCO NEW GENERATION CARTEL



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Formed from the dissolution of the Milenio Cartel and strengthened through temporary alliances with the Sinaloa Cartel, it has since evolved to become one of the most dangerous and powerful drug cartels in Mexico. In 2017, it was declared the most ubiquitous cartel in Mexico by Attorney General Raul Cervantes. By 2018 it had ascended to the top of Mexico's crystal meth production. The same year, several of its highest-ranking members left to form the Nueva Plaza.

GULF CARTEL

Once considered Mexico's most powerful drug trafficking organization, it has since been demoted by Los Zetas, a splinter group that previously acted as its armed wing and now its main rival. It primarily controls criminal operations in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, though it has spread and extended southward into the rest of Mexico and Guatemala. It has succeeded by maintaining a traditional hierarchical structure as newer organizations seek to innovate.

LOS ZETAS

Once the armed wings of the Gulf Cartel, the Zetas were formed from Mexican Special Forces' most skilled and violent soldiers- most famously Arturo Guzman Decena, their first commander. The creation of the Zetas permanently changed the drug business in Mexico, instituting a rapid militarization of cartel violence that extends into today. They are famous for committing extreme acts of violence and branching into illicit trades other than drug trafficking, including human trafficking, weapons trafficking, and even clandestine weapons manufacturing.

SOLUTION ALTERNATIVES

Establishing a reliable and transparent 'violence' scoring system to determine which VDTO or region will be selected as 'most violent' is critical to the legitimacy and success of a differentiated enforcement strategy. Raising awareness for the citizens by making informative and effective posters, putting together productive public speeches with experts' help.



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PAST UN DOCUMENTS

[E/2023/28: Resolution 66/3](#)

[E/2023/28: Resolution 65/1](#)

<https://ecosoc.un.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023/decision-2022316.pdf>

[A/RES/77/238](#)

USEFUL LINKS

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwifsbXkh8uDAxViQ_EDHfxJCKQQFnoECBIAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cfr.org%2Fglobal-conflict-tracker%2Fconflict%2Fcriminal-violence-mexico&usg=AOvVaw2QmQwoLZ_cYeKHxjtHA7gW&opi=89978449

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_drug_war#Background

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinaloa_Cartel#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20National%20

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[MDMA.&text=As%20of%202023%2C%20the%20Sinaloa,Mexico%27s%20most%20dominant%20](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinaloa_Cartel#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20National%20Drug.%2C%20fentanyl%2C%20cannabis%20and%20MDMA.&text=As%20of%202023%2C%20the%20Sinaloa,Mexico%27s%20most%20dominant%20)

[drug%20cartel.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinaloa_Cartel#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20National%20Drug.%2C%20fentanyl%2C%20cannabis%20and%20MDMA.&text=As%20of%202023%2C%20the%20Sinaloa,Mexico%27s%20most%20dominant%20drug%20cartel.)

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjWk6n7uMmDaxV>

[1QvEDHaW0DL0QFnoECCQQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cbsnews.com%2Fnews%2Fmexican-drug](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjWk6n7uMmDaxV1QvEDHaW0DL0QFnoECCQQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cbsnews.com%2Fnews%2Fmexican-drug)

[-cartels-american-weapons-smuggled-across-border%2F&usg=AOvVaw2QU12KgraqHHv1UHkzk9T3&opi=](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjWk6n7uMmDaxV1QvEDHaW0DL0QFnoECCQQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cbsnews.com%2Fnews%2Fmexican-drug)

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